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of the men is inherited by their sons. As in the Nupe economic system the women frequently enjoy a financially more advantageous position than the men we find also that, in the event of economic stress, a mother may take over some of the financial duties normally discharged by the father.

Generally speaking, matrilineal descent in Nupe, including here both descent from the mother as an individual and from her family, has essentially the significance of an ultimate safeguard in case the patrilineal arrangement proves insufficient. In Bida society, with its great inequality of wealth and status, rich or powerful maternal relations may be as valuable as paternal relations; political connexions, especially, through the mother's family will often be utilized profitably. We realize that these 'matrilineal' rights do not follow rigid rules of descent and succession; rather they represent a 'second line of defence' on which individuals can fall back in case the 'first line of defence'—claims derived through the father—has failed. If we speak of the Nupe extended family as 'patrilineal' it will be understood that we refer only to the preponderance and the more rigid formulation of rights and duties transmitted in the father's line. The kinship organization as such, in which the alternative methods of reckoning descent stand in that relation of 'first' and 'second line of defence', can be most aptly described by a term which was suggested by R. W. Firth as 'ambilateral'.

The rule of succession to the rights and duties derived in the paternal line, which, as we have seen, imply a succession running through one whole generation before descending to the next, is expressed very clearly in the Nupe kinship terminology, about which I will only say a few words. It is of the classificatory type and corresponds to the generation pattern: it subsumes all members of the kinship group who are of the same generation under a common term. Thus members of the same generation are all 'brothers' to each other, 'sons' to the generation above them, 'fathers' to the generation below, 'grandsons' to the second generation above, and so forth. Within the generation seniority is specially defined: elder brothers are distinguished from younger brothers, and also the father's elder brothers from the father's younger brothers. The former, who represent the potential family heads senior to one's own (real) father, are called 'father', the latter, who may be placed as junior relations under one's father, 'little father'.

Let me summarize the main kinship concepts with which we shall be concerned in the course of this book. We shall largely disregard the fluid and vaguely defined large kinship unit formed by all individuals who are regarded as being *dengi*. When speaking of kinship group, or large family group, we shall always mean the 'house-group'. To the smallest unit, finally, we shall refer either as the family section, or as the household or labour unit, according to the aspect under which we are considering it. I must add, however, that the Nupe also recognize a much wider unit derived—in a very vague sense—from kinship factors. Thus a whole village is sometimes spoken of as representing one *dengi*, and as having 'one ancestor'. This interpretation does not refer to concrete common descent from an original family, but rather reinterprets

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the existing political structure of the community in a kinship sense. The ancestors of the chief who are regarded as founders of the village are also thought of vaguely as ancestors of the whole community. These essentially mythical kinship links exercise no influence upon concrete kinship claims and obligations.

Political factors are also responsible for the development of the large units which characterize kinship among the ruling family. We shall see that the ruling house of Nupe crystallized in three dynasties, which trace their descent from different sons of the founder of the ruling house, and divide between them the rights and duties vested in the ruling house. The ancestors of the three dynasties lived only two or three generations back; but already certain religious observances (prayers on their grave) mark them off from all subsequent royal ancestors. In this rigidly defined system of reckoning descent in the father's line back to these almost sanctified 'first ancestors', and in the relationship with one another which is in the nature of mutual obligations for the sake of the larger unit, the royal house itself, the three dynasties correspond from kinship point of view to incipient *clans*—the only analogy to clan structure which we find in Nupe.

Let me say in conclusion that kinship structure in Nupe is not that dominant, all-enveloping structure which we know from many primitive societies. Although it bears upon religious life, education, and the organization of production, it is greatly overshadowed as a determinant of social behaviour by the factors of political organization and, in economic life, by economic interests proper. Indeed only because of its lesser significance in social life could we omit the detailed description of Nupe kinship from the sociological analysis with which this book is concerned.